



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

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**A Note from Commissioner Macy
August 2012**

It's mid August and I'm still waiting on a lull in meetings and such around here. Obviously it was my intent to get a Commissioner's note out far more frequently than has been possible. I'll try to use this piece as a quick "catch up" and hope to get on a more routine schedule starting this fall.

National Core Indicators. Let me begin by praising all of the DDS staff who worked so hard to complete 400 consumer surveys for our Core Indicators project. This was a very ambitious undertaking with an exceptionally tight time line. It is, I believe, a critically important project as it gives us the only performance measure available to evaluate our systems against those of our peers across the country. As we've only just entered all of our data it will be a while before we have any meaningful results back. It has been our intent to distribute widely the results when they are available. Watch for more information on this.

Building Teams. Hopefully you've seen in previous press releases that we've made progress on the hiring of key DDS administrative staff. Robin Wood is already having an impact on agency policies and practices in her new role as Director of Family Support Strategies and Advocacy. Siobhan Morgan has also started in her role of Waiver Services Director. She's already exploring waiver issues and will be guiding us on how best to shape them to meet our changing needs. To everyone who has and will be asking, yes, we are requesting to refill both of their former positions. In Robin's case we are seeking a full time Employment Director position. Siobhan's former position will not include the same scope of work that she had been generous enough to take on. Within the next week or so we will be issuing a press release on our appointment of our new Autism Director. (More on that below.)

Still on the subject of building teams, the agency recently held a leadership retreat day. Given that we've recently experienced the largest change in leadership in the last several years, I thought it was important to take a day to stop and assess the values we share that should be driving us and the approach to building teams that will take us into the future. Our new draft Mission and Vision represent these values and we're exploring how some of our regional functions may need to change to be more consistent and be more family and person-centered. A panel of stakeholders lead by one of our very able Self Advocate Coordinators, Genna Lewis, was a highlight of the day. Family members, self advocates, public and private staff and former Commissioner Toni Richardson gave us good guidance on what considerations should be taken as we move in a new direction. A follow up meeting has been scheduled in January to come back together to measure how well we're staying on task. I look forward to the continuation of our conversations about systems change.

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Abuse and Neglect Prevention Initiative. As technology and social media has provided us with more tools to discover outrageous abuses against persons with disabilities, we have new cause to have conversations about prevention. In the past, our response to abuse reports has been like so many other states, we strengthened our investigatory procedures and ensured that our disciplinary responses were effective. Our registry system was a response that was unique in the country. Looking forward, I want to begin a dialogue about how we can be more purposeful in our staff trainings and supervisory practices on this subject. To that end we will be initiating a series of “Listening Tours” with a variety of stakeholders. The purpose of these events will be to solicit ideas on how our entire service delivery system can better communicate our intolerance to abuse and neglect and identify proactive measures for prevention. I am confident that effective staff trainings and personnel practices have been developed by providers, self advocates and families. Our initiative will seek to collect best practices and identify the best ways to disseminate this information. Please look for more updates on this important issue as our “listening Tours” are developed.

Autism Division. Our new Autism Division Director will begin her new duties the first week of September. Like Robin, she comes to us as a family member and a professional with a firm grasp on best practices in the field of Autism. She arrives at a unique moment in time as the legislatively mandated Autism Feasibility Study group has completed its work and is in the final stages of writing a proposal for consideration by Governor Malloy. We anticipate that the feasibility study report will be the blueprint for building the basis for a service delivery system for persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder. I am very excited about the progress that has been made and the direction we’re headed on this essential part of our agency. It has been my pleasure to have had multiple opportunities to speak with the Governor and my fellow human services Commissioners on this initiative. I believe I have mentioned on several occasions how well all of our Commissioners work together, but particularly the Human Services leadership. To this end, I have formed a collaborative with all of them to be an overseeing body of our Autism Division. To my knowledge, this is an unprecedented opportunity for each of us to work together on the highest of public policy levels to ensure consistency of supports across agencies. I expect to have a great deal more to report on this in the near future.

Comings and Goings

Aside from attending all my usual Cabinet meetings I was able to get out and attend some interesting events. I was honored to speak at the CCADD/AAIDD/DDS sponsored Conference. I’ve always admired the leaders of this forum as they produce an excellent program. This year their topic, Aging in Place, fit very well with our developing theme of “Strengthening Families & Building Communities”. I was also honored to be asked to speak at the CCARC 60th Anniversary meeting and the Nonprofit Sector of the Branford Chamber of Commerce. I was able to make a trip to VARCA and visit with consumers in this program. It was also an honor to be asked to speak at The Arc of Quinebaug Valley’s 60th Anniversary meeting where I received a “Special Recognition Award”.

In June, I attended the national forum for my colleagues at the NASDDDS Mid Year Conference. As always, I heard a number of presentations that spoke to the same transition of state programs that we are trying to accomplish- moving from legacy systems to those that are more family and person-centered. Once again, I was very pleased to be asked to speak at the People First Conference. The energy level of this group of leaders was extraordinary. Throughout the last few months, I have been attending, with the Department of Transportation’s Commissioner Redeker, a work group of the ARC CT regarding transportation issues. The lack of reliable resources in this area is certainly contributing to the slow growth of employment for the people we support. I was also honored to speak at the Horizon Common Project, a kickoff event for a history making Family Challenge grant for the agency (formerly Camp Horizons). I also participated on a panel with some of my fellow Human Services Commissioners in the Department of Children and Families First 1,000 Days forum.

In July, I was very pleased to attend the Special Olympics Board Meeting. As everyone knows this is a vital organization that is making extraordinary efforts to build “inclusive communities”. I am looking forward to attending some of their events this fall. I also attended the 14th Annual Youth Leadership Forum at UCONN. This was an amazing event that DDS and other state agencies play a major leadership role in. It was great to see our Self Advocate Coordinators play a significant role in the program. Lastly, Joe and I made the rounds up

in the western “quiet Corner” of the state visiting LARC’s programs including their Camp Moe program. The camp is an integrated summer program. This was followed by a tour of our Torrington Regional Center that included a great “Town Hall meeting” with staff.

I would encourage everyone to continue to visit our “Community Connections” section of the DDS website. We continue to post articles about a variety of topics, many that explain perspectives being shared on the national scene.

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